

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended): A method for forming individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising the steps of:
 - applying an effective amount of an α -hydroxy polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agent in the presence of an effective amount of a polyol to a mat of cellulosic fibers,
 - separating the mat into substantially individualized fibers, drying the treated individualized fibers,
 - curing the crosslinking agent in the presence of the polyol to form individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers,
 - wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from ~~about 182 °C~~ 185 °C to ~~about 215 °C~~; and
 - wherein the Whiteness Index, (WI_(CDM-L)), of the individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers is greater than about 73.0.
2. (Canceled).
3. (Currently Amended): The method of Claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid, α -hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.
4. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.
5. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.
6. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols and heterosides and mixtures thereof.
7. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the acyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol, and volemitol and mixtures thereof.
8. (Previously presented): The method of claim 7 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

9. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-Inositol.

10. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the heteroside is selected from the group consisting of isomalt, lactitol, and maltitol or mixtures thereof.

11. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 10 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.

12 (Previously presented): The method of claim 10 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.

13. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the cellulose mat before the application of the crosslinking agent.

14. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the crosslink treated individualized fibers before curing.

15 (Canceled)

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 193°C to about 215°C.